



Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board

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Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board 2004 Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

Thousands of California citizens experience congenital or acquired speech, language, hearing, swallowing, and balance disorders. The Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board protects consumers by requiring adherence to statutes and regulations designed to ensure the qualifications and competency of providers of speech-language pathology and audiology services. In addition to ensuring minimum educational requirements, the Board oversees a continuing professional development program to maintain clinical relevance. The Board is also responsible for protecting consumers from unlicensed, incompetent, and unethical practitioners by investigating complaints regarding possible violations of the laws and regulations.

Under its 2004 Strategic Plan, the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board proposes a direction that expands on its previous year's accomplishments. Some of the Board's most recent accomplishments include:

- Developed a regulatory proposal establishing the Board's Complaint Disclosure Guidelines;
- Filed regulations to recover the costs for issuing license history and certification letters;
- Identified key scope of practice issues and developed an action plan for addressing issues that will be included in the Board's 2005 Sunset Review Report;
- Worked with state associations and other interested parties to address overlapping scope of practice issues that exist among with speech-language pathology and other professions, i.e., occupational therapy (swallowing procedures), physical therapy (electrical stimulation), and educational therapists and behavior analysts (communication intervention);
- Worked with the academic community to identify regulatory amendments to redefine the standards for Board-approved educational institutions that award entry-level professional degrees and/or advanced professional degrees in speech-language pathology and audiology;
- Executed the Board's first continuing professional development audit; and
- Identified and prepared legislative and regulatory proposals to amend the Board's continuing professional development program and extend Board oversight to the professional learning experiences required of licensees.

These achievements provide the foundation for the high priority goals and strategic issues identified by the Board for the current year, which are:

- Preparing the 2005 Sunset Review Report for the Legislature;
- Continuing to develop standards of education within the profession;
- Addressing professional practice overlap with both regulated and non-regulated professions;
- Providing guidance to licensed professionals on advanced practice provisions, patient confidentiality laws, and prohibited business arrangements; and
- Assessing the effectiveness of the Board's enforcement program and its complaint disclosure policies to establish procedures for disclosing relevant enforcement information to consumers.

The Board initiated and completed the current strategic planning process in April of 2004. This document presents the Board's Mission, Vision, Strategic Issues, Success Factors, and Goals and Objectives for the next two years. Included in this plan are an overview of the Board's clients and stakeholders and their various needs from the Board, an assessment of the current environment in which the Board functions, and a summary of accomplishments. As part of the planning process, the Board will complete action plans to implement its goals and objectives, as well as establish performance measures to evaluate its progress.

Mission

To promote services and protect consumers through information, oversight, and standards for the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology. This serves to:

- Enhance community outreach, education, and responsiveness to consumers and licensees;
- Maintain standards that evolve with relevant changes in scope of practice;
- Monitor the impact of state and national trends on professional practices; and
- Work collaboratively with other boards, educational institutions, organizations, governmental, and enforcement agencies to assure quality services for consumers.

Vision

The Board serves to protect consumers by ensuring safe and efficacious practice and facilitating excellence in speech-language pathology and audiology.

Strategic Issues

- 1) Develop the Board's Sunset Review Report for submission to the Legislature in the fall of 2005;
- 2) Evaluate Standards of Education, including:
 - Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course content and provider qualifications
 - Changes in national standards for required education and experience
 - Effective communication with training institutions to update curricula
 - Changes in academic standards required in order to enter the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology
- 3) Strengthen the Board enforcement program by revisiting the Board's disciplinary guidelines and its citation and fine provisions;
- 4) Review current statutory prohibitions on professional referrals and identify an appropriate course of action to educate licensees about unlawful business arrangements;
- 5) Support and assist with legislative movements to provide mandatory health care benefits for hearing devices for children and adults; and
- 6) Assist other regulatory Boards with the development of standards for professional services that overlap with those of speech-language pathology and audiology.

Success Factors

- Complete the Sunset Review report and submit to the Legislature by September 2005;
- Determine compliance with, and evaluate the effectiveness of, the mandatory Continuing Professional Development requirements;
- Determine appropriate course of action to respond to changes in national standards;

- Address changes in academic standards in speech-language pathology and audiology by modifying licensing requirements to reflect current entry-level professional degrees and advanced professional degrees;
- Update the Board's disciplinary guidelines and citation and fine regulations to reflect appropriate disciplinary standards for each licensing category under the Board's jurisdiction;
- Assist with legislation that clarifies the current statute prohibiting professional referrals for compensation; and
- Collaborate with regulatory boards, governmental agencies, and professional associations in addressing overlapping governance issues affecting speech-language pathology and audiology service delivery; for example, development of pediatric audiology standards with DHS, definition of audiology support personnel with input from DHS, CMS, and CAA; and supervision of occupational therapists in collaboration with the BOT and CSHA.

Goals

- Goal 1: Submit the Sunset Review Report to the Legislature by September 2005.
- Goal 2: Pursue legislative and regulatory amendments to specify acceptable course content for the purposes of continuing professional development.
- Goal 3: Amend outdated regulations regarding Board-approved academic institutions, and update licensing standards to reflect current entry-level and advanced professional degrees.
- Goal 4: Review and evaluate changes in national standards affecting entry level professional requirements and determine if and when amendments to state standards are appropriate, and develop an effective process to ensure timely communication with training institutions to update curricula.
- Goal 5: Amend the Board's disciplinary guidelines and citation and fine regulations to reflect appropriate disciplinary standards for each licensing category under the Board's jurisdiction.
- Goal 6: Adopt regulations to implement the Board information disclosure standards.
- Goal 7: Develop a legislative proposal that clarifies prohibitions against speech-language pathologists and audiologists engaging in referrals for remuneration.
- Goal 8: Appoint a Board representative to serve as a liaison to the Hearing Aid Dispensers Advisory Committee to possibly collaborate on the examination of crosscutting issues pertaining to both agencies.

Description of the Board

The Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board (SLPAB) was established in 1974 as a licensing body of the Medical Board of California under the provisions of Section 2530.2 of the Business and Professions Code. The SLPAB is a part of the California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA).

Senate Bill 1982, introduced in the 1997-98 legislative session by the then Chair of the Joint Legislative Sunset Review Committee, would have merged the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board with the Hearing Aid Dispensers Examining Committee by creating a new Speech and Hearing Sciences Board. It was defeated on the Assembly Floor. As a result of this action, the Board was sunsetted on July 1, 1999 and became a program under the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Subsequently, Assembly Bill 124, introduced in the 1998-99 legislative session, passed and restored the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board, effective January 1, 2000. Governor Davis appointed seven professional members to the Board in December 2000, and shortly thereafter, the Speaker of the Assembly, Robert M. Hertzberg, appointed one public member.

At full capacity, the Board is composed of nine members appointed by the Governor and the Legislature, including three speech-language pathologists, three audiologists, and three members of the public, including one physician and surgeon who is board-certified in otolaryngology.

The SLPAB's mandate is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of people in California who have speech-language, swallowing, hearing, and/or balance impairments, and to ensure that speech-language pathology and audiology services meet the highest possible standards.

The Board's budget comes entirely from license application and renewal fees paid by the state's licensed speech-language pathologists, audiologists, speech-language pathology assistants, registered aides, and continuing professional development providers. These funds are used to regulate the professional activities of the following:

- speech-language pathologists;
- audiologists;
- speech-language pathology assistants;
- speech-language pathology aides and audiology aides;
- Required Professional Experience (RPE) temporary licensees who are obtaining their work experience for permanent licensure; and
- continuing professional development providers.

The Board currently oversees:

- 9,200 licensed speech-language pathologists;
- 1,400 licensed audiologists;
- 250 speech-language pathology assistants;
- 75 speech-language pathology aides;
- 38 audiology aides;
- 570 RPE temporary licensees; and
- 140 continuing professional development providers.

The SLPAB receives an average of 40 complaints a year against individuals practicing speech-language pathology or audiology. Complaints that merit investigation are assigned to the Division of Investigation in the Department of Consumer Affairs. Sanctions (i.e., citations, fines, license suspensions, and revocations) are levied against practitioners when warranted by these investigations.

Accomplishments

- Designed a new email listserv to disseminate a periodic “Hot Sheet,” which alerts licensees and interested parties of Board activities, such as, proposed regulations, new changes to the laws affecting the professional licenses, and upcoming Board events.
- Updated the Student Manual, sent multiple copies of the Manual to the university training programs to provide to graduating students, and solicited interest from training programs on future on-site licensing presentations provided by Board staff.
- Reviewed complaint disclosure policies and developed proposed regulations to identify relevant complaint information that is subject to public disclosure.
- Developed a detailed enforcement tracking system that monitors each stage of complaint handling and provides statistical data on the nature of each complaint action. Consulted with the Attorney General’s Office on disciplinary case proceedings, and developed internal procedures that provide for efficient administrative case transfers.
- Conducted consumer satisfaction surveys, which are ongoing, of the Board’s complaint-handling process in preparation for Sunset Review.
- Held two public forums, at which interested parties were invited to address the Board and testify on the need for regulatory oversight in the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology.
- Updated laws and regulations during 2003.
- Developed and implemented procedures for reporting Board disciplinary actions, dating from August 1996 to the present, to the Health Integrity Protection Data Bank, and provided specific information and internet links on the Board’s web page to assist licensees in obtaining relevant information on health practitioners’ mandated responsibilities under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.
- Developed and mailed a newsletter to those on the Board’s mailing list, with information on new laws and regulations effective in 2003.
- Participated in consumer outreach events and provided a Power-Point presentation to university training programs to inform graduate students about the Board’s licensing and regulatory functions.
- Executed a service agreement with Language Line Services to provide readily available telephone interpreter services in 140 languages.
- Translated the Board’s Consumer Complaint Form into Spanish and posted the form on the Board’s website.
- Provided professional input to the Board of Occupational Therapy on developing advanced practice regulations that define the requirements an occupational therapist must satisfy in order to qualify for an advanced practice certificate in swallowing assessment or intervention.

Clients/Stakeholders

The Board has a number of individual and organizational clients and stakeholders who depend on it to meet their various needs. These groups and their needs are identified in the following table (the needs identified are not in priority order):

<u>Clients and Stakeholders</u>	<u>Needs</u>
<u>Individuals</u>	
Consumers of Services	Assurance of safety, competence, and measurable standards of practice; timely and relevant information; accessibility; protection, recourse, and responsiveness through enforcement of the Board's practice act; and an effective and accountable program.
General Public	Timely and relevant information; education; and an effective and accountable program.
Licensees <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practitioners• Applicants• Continuing Professional Development Providers	Current and relevant information; timely responses; a partnership working toward a common goal that licensing expectations and requirements promote consumer protection and are reasonable for the profession; enforcement of the Board's practice act; a Board that is open-minded and adapts to changes and trends in the profession (statewide and nationally); an effective and accountable program that is proactive.
Employers	Timely and relevant information; interpretation of laws and regulations; assurance that they are in compliance with laws and regulations; assurance that licensees have obtained a minimum level of education and training to meet established standards of practice; and assurance that newly licensed practitioners have demonstrated a minimum level of competency.

Clients and Stakeholders
Individuals (continued)

Needs

Board Staff

Responsible and responsive Board members who are interactive and communicative; timely responses to scope of practice issues; maintenance of collaborative and respectful working relationships; and facilitation of the flow of information.

Organizations

Consumer Groups

Information and outreach; responsiveness; and recourse for consumer protection.

Legislature

An effective consumer protection agency; collaborative working relationship; and complete, relevant information supported by evidence-based data to assist in the decision-making process.

Governor's Office, State and Consumer Services Agency, and DCA

An effective consumer protection agency; partnership; support of the DCA Mission and Vision; collaborative working relationship; and complete, relevant information supported by evidence-based data to assist in the decision-making process.

Professional Associations

Relevant and timely information; clear, relevant regulations and laws; and consideration of federal regulations and national standards and the needs of the public.

Training Institutions

Information on standards of practice and licensure through direct communication and proactive outreach.

Inter/Intra-State Boards

Verification of information and sharing of information to improve the California Board's effectiveness.

Clients and Stakeholders
Organizations (continued)

Federal Government

Needs

Information on practice and standards of
licensure.
